A Note for the Grown-Up in Charge

This kit turns the last 24 days before Christmas into a nightly read-aloud ritual. It is not a race, not a school task, and not a test of how many books you own. One card a night, read together, is the whole job — everything else is decoration.

How to run it

1. Pick your start. Begin on 1 December and take one card a day through 24 December. Starting late? Just start on today's number — skipped days are simply skipped, never 'caught up' in a rush.

2. Cut out the cards — or don't. Pages 4–27 are the 24 daily cards. Cut them out and fold them into envelopes, a jar, or a paper chain, or simply turn one page a night in this book. Both ways work; the jar is more exciting, the book is less work.

3. Choose the book together. Each card gives a read-aloud prompt, not a prescribed title. Use a book you already own, borrow one from the library, or pick from the age-banded lists on pages 28–30. A story retold from memory counts. A picture book read twice counts double.

4. Do the little activity, then talk. Every card pairs the reading with one small, doable activity — cocoa, drawing, a kindness, a question. Ten minutes is plenty. The 'Tonight's Talk' question is there so the conversation starts itself.

5. Mark it and keep it. Tick the box on each card, and use the keepsake page (p. 33) on Christmas Eve to write down the one night you will all remember.

What you need

This kit, a printer, scissors (optional), and whatever books are already on your shelves. Cocoa, crayons and wrapping paper help, but nothing here requires a purchase. If an activity does not fit your family — a food allergy, a small flat, a child who hates drawing — swap it for any other card's activity. The ritual matters; the exact activity does not.

Ages, honestly

The cards are written so a whole family can share them: a 3-year-old listens to the picture book, a 9-year-old does the drawing, an 11-year-old leads the discussion. The age-banded lists help you pitch the *book* to each listener; the *card* belongs to everyone.

Personal Use — print for your own family as often as you like.

Day 1 — The First Light

■ **Read aloud:** Read a story about a journey through snow or winter darkness.

✦ **Tonight's little activity:** Make the first cocoa of the countdown together — everyone chooses one topping.

■ **Tonight's talk:** What is the cosiest place you have ever read a book?

■ We read it ■ We did the activity Book: _____

Our favourite line or moment tonight:

_____

_____

Book Lists — Ages 2–5: Picture Books to Borrow or Own

For the youngest listeners, choose short, rhythmic picture books with pictures to linger over. You do not need to buy anything: a library card covers this whole list. Look for books in these kinds — your library will have its own favourites in each.

Snowy journeys. A picture book about travelling through snow — by foot, sleigh or train — where the pictures do half the telling.

A small hero's big night. A story where a very small character does something brave in a big winter world.

Animals in winter. A gentle story about how animals spend the cold months — sleeping, sharing, or keeping warm together.

The first snowfall. A book that simply celebrates the first snow: catching flakes, building, slipping, laughing.

A family preparing. A story about a family getting ready for a celebration — cooking, decorating, waiting.

A kindness in the cold. A picture book where someone shares food, warmth or shelter with a stranger.

Songs and rhymes. A rhyming or singable winter book — one you can chant together on the second reading.

A quiet bedtime tale. A slow, soft book for the nights when everyone is tired — lamplight stories, sleepy animals, goodnight wishes.

A classic to inherit. A long-loved winter picture book a grandparent may remember — ask them which one they read as a child.

Your child's own choice. Let the youngest listener choose one book entirely by its cover. Cover-choices are often the best ones.

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